Garib Rath

2724. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Garib Rath trains existing in the country since its implementation and the States being covered; and

(b) what is the public response, so far, to Garib Rath train scheme?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Presently 4 pairs of "Garib Rath" express trains are running in the country. These trains are serving the states of Delhi, Gujarat, Maharastra, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Haryana and Punjab.

(b) Response has been very good.

Rail link with neighbouring countries

2725. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether in a significant move to strengthen bilateral relations between Bangladesh and India, Indian Railways, after a gap of four decades, is getting ready to revive its rail links with the neighbouring countries;

(b) if so, whether the agreement between Bangladesh and India for running the train needs to be renewed and an agreement in this regard is likely to be signed;

(c) whether the Railways have already got the clearance from the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Customs Department in this regard; and

(d) if so, by when the train services between the two countries are likely to be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (d) There are already rail links between India and Bangladesh through the following five routes:

Gede (India)-Darsana (Bangladesh)	- Broad Gauge
Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh)	- Broad Gauge
Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh)	- Broad Gauge
Radhikapur (India)-Birol (Bangladesh)	-Broad Gauge on Indian side.and Metre Gauge on Bangladesh side.

Mahisasan (India)-Shahbazpur (Bangladesh) - Metre Gauge.

Presently only goods train services are running between India and Bangladesh through Gede-Darsana, Singhabad-Rohanpur and Petrapole-Benapole BG routes. Operation of Radhikapur-Birol route has remained suspended since 01.04.2005 due to Broadgauging on Indian side while the track on Birol-Parbatipur section in Bangladesh Railway is still in Metre Gauge. The Mahisasan-Shahbazpur MG route has not been operational since December, 1996 due to lack of traffic.

Also, an agreement for running Passenger Train Service between Sealdah and Jamuna Bridge was signed in 2001 and during the visit of Minister of External Affairs to Dhaka on February 19, 2007, Bangladesh agreed for early operationalisation of Sealdah (Kolkata)-Joydevpur (Dhaka) passenger train service. This was reiterated by both sides in the Inter-Governmental Railway Meeting held in Dhaka in March, 2007.

On 8th July, 2007, the Indian Team comprising officers from the concerned Ministries/Departments conducted a trial run of the passenger train. In the Inter-Governmental Meeting held on July 9-10, 2007 in Dhaka, both sides expressed their willingness to commence the commercial operation of the passenger train as early as possible subject to other relevant related concerns being addressed to mutual satisfaction. Bangladesh side also conducted their trial run service on July 29, 2007. However, regular traffic is yet to commence.

Setting up coach factory at Cherthala

2726. PROF P.J. KURIEN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have announced setting up of a coach factory at Cherthala in Kerala,

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the action taken in this regard; and

(d) by when the unit would commence its operation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NARANBHAI RATHWA): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Rail projects for the North East Region

2727. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of rail projects proposed for the North East Region during the Eleventh Plan period; and

(b) whether solid plans have been made for the success of the same so that it doesn't meet the fate of Bogibeel project?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R.VELU): (a) and (b) There is no such specific plan for inclusion of new works in North East Region during Eleventh Plan. The Plan document is not yet finalized.

Plan to provide more facilities in railway colonies

†2728. SHRI SAMAN PATHAK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have any plan to give more facilities to railway colonies;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.